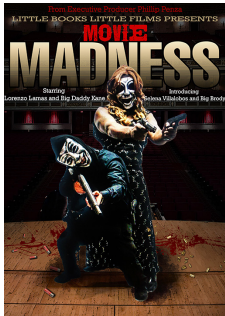


Movie Madness: Giving Back to Arizona

Written by Nicole Tyau

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In the lobby of Roadhouse Cinemas in Scottsdale, director Phillip Penza sits at a long table, littered with half-full cups and half-eaten nachos, with three women. While they are manicured in business-professional attire, Penza sports a vest with several pockets and a baseball cap with the title of his previous movie, *My Name is Nobody*, a film based off a 70-some-odd page autobiographical account of his bloody childhood, of love found and lost, and the will to be somebody.

Today, he's planning the premiere of his newest film, *Movie Madness*—the story of an assassin hired to murder a senator's pregnant mistress in a movie theater. Though the premise rings eerily familiar of the Aurora shooting, Penza insists that the point is far from being a fictionalized retelling of some of the most tragic days in recent American history.

In its newest trailer, *Movie Madness* strikes with dark imagery, the thudding of an ever-quicken heartbeat and a chilling message: "Is this what we've become?"

He didn't write it to be offensive or to shock for shock's sake, he says. He wrote it as a wake-up call.

"I wanted to make the world aware of what's happening," Penza says. "We hear about it but we don't ever get to see it. I tried to make a film where people can see what happens—the ugliness of it and the reality that this is really happening."

Penza is a man well acquainted with tragedy, and he wants to know why an interpersonal disconnection has pervaded modern society. He's mystified at the disappearance of evenings spent talking with neighbors and of blocks abuzz with each others' lives.

The movie was filmed primarily in Flagstaff, where Penza received a great deal of support from the community. He was allowed to shoot at the Flagstaff Medical Center for an entire week free of charge. However, the day after filming, a student was shot outside a fraternity on the Northern Arizona University campus. One person died and three were injured in the shooting, and for those working on the set, it struck too close to home for what they had just finished making.

"We've got to change it," Penza says. "We have to."

The point of *Movie Madness* from the start was to address passivity between strangers and a growing societal trend that people will do nothing rather than do something.

"It's an event, like a drive-by shooting, like stealing Air Jordans or Gucci chains or when planes were getting hi-jacked in the 70's," Penza says. "It's almost like it's a trend. When stuff like this happens, we record it so we can get hits on YouTube. It's like they wanted to see [the violence] and see more of it."

To Penza, violent video games are contributing to a desensitized society and has one simple takeaway: "This is what we're doing to our children."

"It's extremely violent and it depicts what's going on today as real as possible," he elaborates. "It's the mere concept of making the public aware of what's going on—but with a message."

Movie Madness premieres on Wednesday, Sept. 28, at Roadhouse Cinemas in Scottsdale. Visit the [website](#) for more details.